



International  
Water Resources  
Association

# Terms of Reference Co-Hosting & Co-Organising **IWRA ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS**

The purpose of this document is to explain the process of selecting the co-host and co-organiser for an IWRA Islands Water Congress and to describe in detail the various roles and responsibilities.



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# IWRA CONGRESSES

## FIVE DECADES OF IWRA CONGRESS EXPERTISE

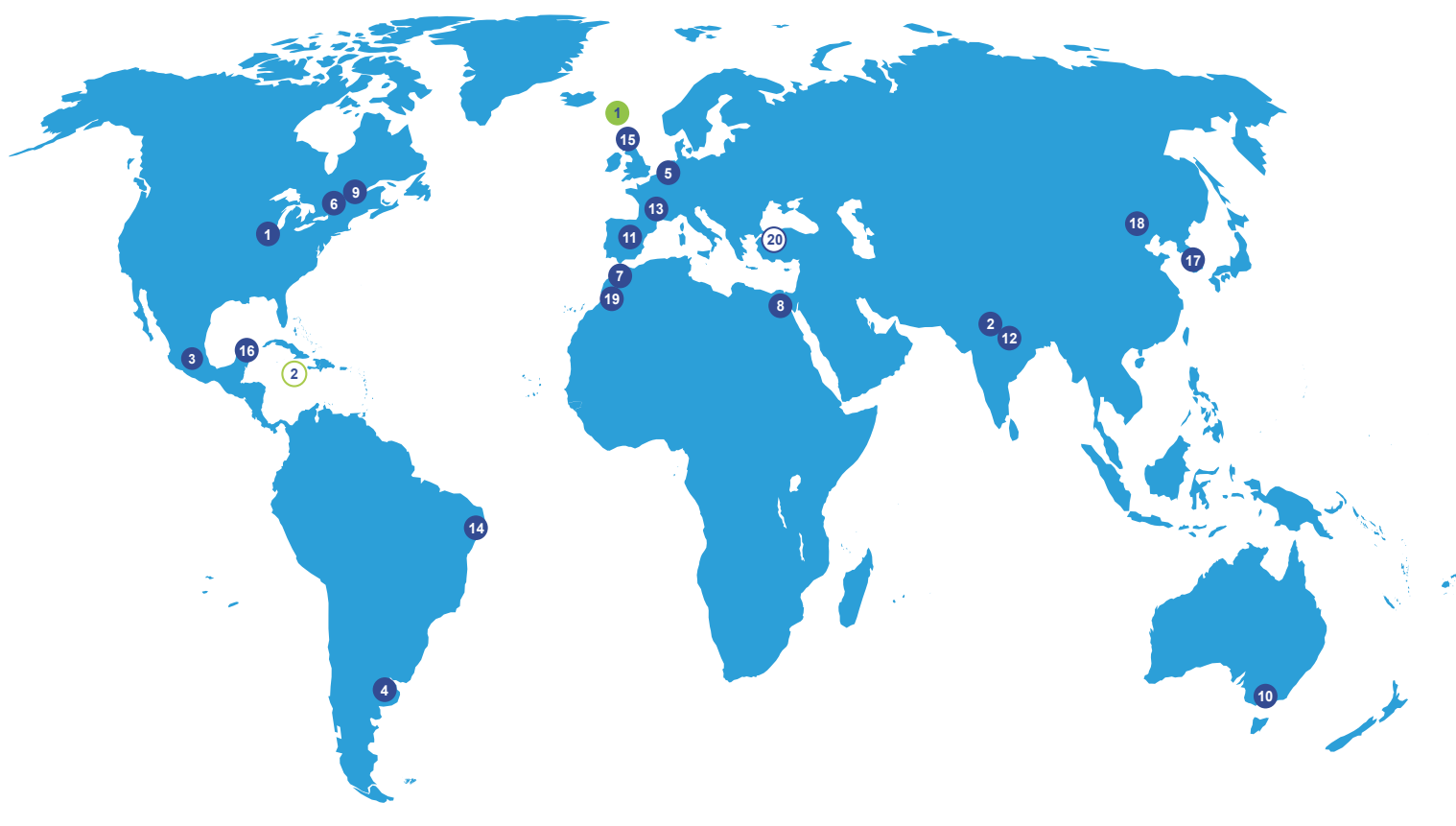
For more than five decades, the International Water Resources Association (IWRA) has regularly convened the global water community through its high-level international congresses and specialised events. These platforms are designed to advance dialogue, promote knowledge-sharing, and connect science, policy, and practice in support of improved water resources management worldwide.

For instance, IWRA's flagship World Water Congress is its largest and most established event, held every two to three years across different locations. It brings together 1,500–3,000 stakeholders from across sectors and regions and is widely recognised for shaping global water discourse and highlighting key priorities on the international water agenda.

The first IWRA World Water Congress was held

in 1973 on the theme of the “Importance and Problems of Water in the Human Environment in Modern Times” and formed part of the international water community's first earnest attempts to address global water issues (e.g., the ground-breaking Stockholm Declaration of 1972 and the Mar del Plata conference of 1977). More concrete outcomes of the World Water Congress are also visible at the international, national, and local levels. This includes the establishment of the World Water Council following the Congress in Cairo (1994), the strengthening of national water collaboration in France through the Montpellier Congress (2008), which led to the creation of the National French Water Cluster, increased international visibility for Scotland's Hydro Nation programme (2015), launch of the World Water Envoys Programme (2021) and a Ministerial Declaration (2025) to accelerate progress toward SDG 6 and related goals by 2030.

# Our congresses over time



## Islands Water Congress

1 Faroe Islands | 4-6 September 2024

2 Montego Bay, Jamaica | 9-11 December 2026

## World Water Congress

1 Chicago, U.S.A | 24-28 September 1973

4 Buenos Aires, Argentina | 5-9 September 1982

7 Rabat, Morocco | 13-18 May 1991

10 Melbourne, Australia | 12-16 March 2000

13 Montpelier, France | 1-4 September 2008

16 Cancun, Mexico | 29 May-3 June 2017

19 Marrakech, Morocco | 1-5 December 2025

2 New Delhi, India | 12-16 December 1975

5 Brussels, Belgium | 9-15 June 1985

8 El Cairo, Egypt | 13-18 May 1994

11 Madrid, Spain | 5-9 October 2003

14 Porto-De-Galinas, Brazil | 25-29 September 2011

17 Daegu, Republic of Korea | 29 Nov-3 Dec 2021

20 Istanbul, Türkiye | October 2027

3 Mexico City, Mexico | 23 April 1979

6 Ottawa, Canada | 29 May-3 June 1988

9 Montreal, Canada | 1-6 September 1997

12 New Delhi, India | 22-25 November 2005

15 Edinburgh, UK | 25-29 May 2015

18 Beijing, China | 11-15 September 2023



## IWRA ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS SERIES

### CONTEXT

Island communities face distinct freshwater challenges, which are influenced by scale, geography, climate vulnerability, governance structures, and economic and demographic change. Yet, while island communities share certain characteristics, each island faces its own distinct realities – even islands within the same country or region can vary significantly from each other. This means that islands present unique water management conditions that are not appropriately addressed through frameworks developed for continental settings.

As a result, islands can act as both early warning systems of emerging water challenges and as sites of innovation for new solutions.

### IWRA ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS

Building on decades of experience delivering international water congresses, in 2024 IWRA launched the Islands Water Congress as the only global event dedicated specifically to the freshwater challenges and opportunities faced by island nations and communities.

Held for two to three days every two years, the Islands Water Congress brings together island governments, practitioners, researchers and communities to advance island-specific water management approaches. The Congress combines global expertise with local relevance, enabling host islands to address their priority challenges and contribute practical insight to a growing international body of island water knowledge.

### 1ST ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS

The inaugural IWRA Islands Water Congress was held from 4–6 September 2024 in partner-

ship with the Faroe Islands, under the theme “Administration, Collaboration and Innovation”. The Congress brought together expertise from across regions to support the host partner, the Faroese Geological Survey (Jarðfeingi), in developing practical steps to address their own priority challenges, while convening a broader community of island actors and Small Island Developing States for exchange and shared learning on islands-specific freshwater management. As with all IWRA events, the Islands Water Congress is designed to deliver a lasting legacy for the host country. The first Islands Water Congress resulted in multiple tangible outcomes, including:

- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding which established the Tórshavn Dialogue on Sustainable Freshwater Management on Islands;
- Production of the IWRA Islands Water Congress Policy Report;
- Formation of a legal expert group drawn from the Congress International Scientific Committee;
- Creation of a new IWRA Task Force on Islands and Water;
- Development of special journal issues in *Water International* and *Island Studies*;
- Integration of island perspectives into the XIX World Water Congress in 2025; and
- Contribution to the advancement of a draft Water Act for the Faroe Islands, expected to be considered by the Faroese Parliament.

Overall, co-hosting the IWRA Islands Water Congress offers host islands a unique opportunity to deliver lasting impact locally and across island communities worldwide.

# 1st Islands Water Congress at a glance

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# 196+

PARTICIPANTS

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# 81

 SPEAKERS  
FROM OVER

# 40

 COUNTRIES  
AND ISLANDS

Representation from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, North, Central and South America, and Oceania

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# 10

 KEYNOTE  
SPEAKERS

# 15

 REGULAR  
SESSIONS

# 7

 PLENARY  
SESSIONS

# 5

 SIDE-EVENTS

# 2

 TECHNICAL  
TRIPS

# 1

 HIGH-LEVEL POLICY  
ROUNDTABLE

Contributions related to:

# 33

 ISLANDS

# 4

 ISLAND  
GROUPINGS

## BENEFITS OF CO-HOSTING & CO-ORGANISING THE IWRA ISLANDS WATER CONGRESS

### LEADERSHIP

Positions the host islands as a leader in fresh-water management, gaining international attention from researchers, policy-makers, water authorities, private sector, and civil society organisations.

### COLLABORATION

Strengthens collaboration in local and national water communities while engaging host islands in regional and global water dialogues.

### NETWORKING

Provides excellent opportunities for networking with both island and non-island water communities.

### REPUTATION

Showcases local and national water expertise, research excellence, and innovation, all while providing a platform for the host island to contribute to international scientific and policy debates.

### EXPERTISE

An IWRA Islands Water Congress brings various high-level experts as speakers and attracts high-level personalities, including well-known politicians and heads of large international organisations.

### REVENUE

Provides economic and tourism benefits via large-scale international participation.

### RECOGNITION

Both IWRA and our Congresses are well-established and globally recognised brands in the water sector. IWRA commits to aiding the hosts to engage the media, press and other international organisations.

### LEGACY

Creates a lasting legacy by strengthening relationships and building local capacity for island communities, while generating outcomes that extend far beyond the event itself.



1st Islands Water Congress: International Scientific Committee





## WHO ATTENDS AND WHY

### PRACTITIONERS

#### (Water Managers, Utilities, and Technicians)

- Exchange practical experience, challenges, and solutions across the water sector.
- Learn from case studies, innovations, and applied research in water management.
- Gain insight into emerging trends, technologies, and operational approaches.

### PRIVATE SECTOR

#### (Industry and Company Representatives)

- Understand market trends, policy directions, and emerging technologies.
- Explore business opportunities, partnerships, and collaboration with public and private actors.
- Engage with decision-makers and position expertise through panels and technical sessions.

### POLICYMAKERS

#### (Political Leaders and Technical Officials)

- Learn from policy approaches and governance models implemented in other regions.
- Exchange experiences with islands facing similar water challenges.
- Strengthen evidence-based decision-making and public engagement on water issues.

### ACADEMICS/RESEARCHERS

#### (especially from Science, Policy, and Law)

- Showcase and access the latest research and analytical insights.
- Build research partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Contribute knowledge and insights that deepen understanding of freshwater in island contexts.



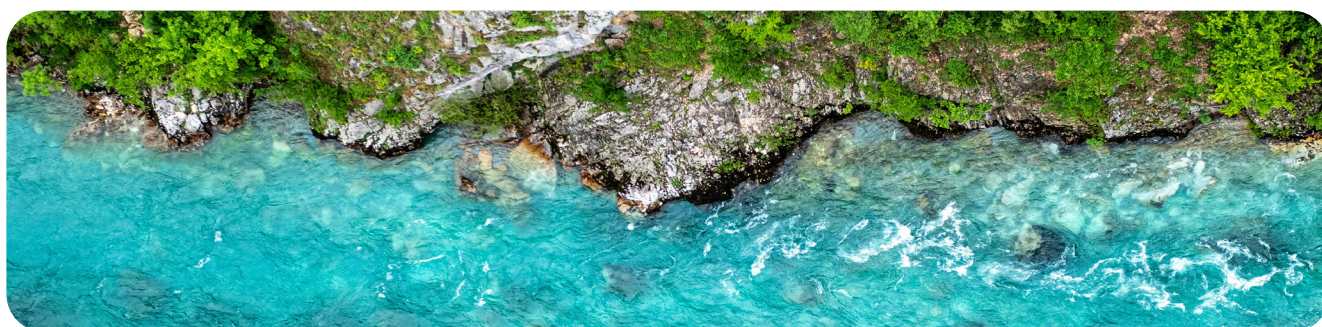
# ABOUT IWRA

**IWRA is an international, non-governmental, member-based organisation established in 1971. It is widely recognised as a leading global forum at the interface of water science and policy, advancing understanding and practice in water resources management worldwide.**

IWRA's mission is to build and strengthen partnerships that address water resource challenges and priorities at the local, national, and international level. We do so by bringing together the

global water community from across geographies, sectors and disciplines to improve water outcomes for all.

The Association promotes water education and research grounded in sound scientific, social, and ethical principles. IWRA seeks to continuously improve water-related decision-making by supporting a more integrated understanding of the physical, ecological, chemical, cultural, social, and economic dimensions of water.



**Specifically, IWRA aims to:**

- Provide platforms for dialogue on water resources at international, regional, and national levels;
- Strengthen the quality and accessibility of knowledge used in water-related decision-making;
- Promote cutting-edge research to inform policy and practice;
- Facilitate the exchange of information and expertise across countries, sectors, and professions; and
- Collaborate with leading international organisations.

**IWRA achieves these aims by:**

- Organising flagship events such as World Water Congress, Islands Water Congress, and Regional Water Congress;
- Delivering online conferences, webinars, masterclasses, and other virtual events in partnership with key water organisations;
- Publishing *Water International* (IWRA's peer-reviewed journal), special books, and policy briefs on key water topics;
- Developing and implementing thematic projects with partners, such as UNESCO, FAO, OECD, World Water Council, and Asia Water Council;
- Disseminating knowledge through digital channels, including IWRA's website, newsletters, and social media; and
- Coordinating member-led activities through Task Forces, Working Groups, and Geographic Chapters.



1st Islands Water Congress: Faroe Islands field trip

# APPLICATION & TERMS OF REFERENCE

## STEP 1: EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST JANUARY - MARCH 2026

Expressions of Interest (Eoi) should be addressed to the IWRA Executive Office by email to:

[office@iwra.org](mailto:office@iwra.org),  
[islands.congress@iwra.org](mailto:islands.congress@iwra.org) (in CC)

Eois must not exceed two (2) pages and should include:

- The lead bidding organisation
- Any proposed co-hosting organisations
- Proposed host city and island
- Details of proposed venue, including maximum capacity
- Preferred dates for hosting the Islands Water Congress
- Motivation for hosting the Islands Water Congress

- Proposed main theme of the Islands Water Congress
- Identification of the organisation(s) committed to payment of hosting fee
- Institutional resources available to support the Islands Water Congress
- Agreement with the Terms of Reference of this document

All Eois will be reviewed by the IWRA Congress & Events Committee. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to submit a full written application by an agreed deadline.

## STEP 2: FULL WRITTEN APPLICATIONS

### APRIL - JUNE 2026

Full applications must be submitted in digital format to:

[office@iwra.org](mailto:office@iwra.org),

[islands.congress@iwra.org](mailto:islands.congress@iwra.org)

IWRA's Executive Office will support the short-listed bidders throughout this process to ensure that the submitted documents are complete and aligned with requirements.

#### **Full applications should include the following elements:**

#### **1. An official proposal letter from the head of the bidding organisation.**

#### **2. Letters of support from the co-coordinators and the principal funders of the Congress.**

#### **3. A detailed proposal explaining:**

- a. Experience of the bidding organisation in the water sector, including examples of relevant past events
- b. Key partners within and outside the host island, and links to other international water events
- c. Governance and management mechanisms for the Islands Water Congress, such as logistics, promotion, registration, budgeting, and accounting, in accordance with the Term of Reference.
- d. Suitability of the proposed location (including conference facilities for plenaries, concurrent sessions, exhibitors, posters, side events, press conferences, interpreter facilities and VIPs; maximum venue capacity; hotel and accommodation options; transport links and accessibility; opportunities for technical/cultural visits;

visa requirements; engagement with local community educational programmes; green credentials; and other relevant details).

- e. Any official languages of the Islands Water Congress in addition to English, and whether simultaneous translation will be made available for other languages.
- f. Proposed dates, noting that the Congress shall last for 2-3 consecutive days, starting on a date of the hosts' own choosing in September, October, or November of the relevant year, and with consideration to the expected timing of other significant water conferences, such as IWRA World Water Congresses and Stockholm World Water Week, as well as any significant holidays and other global events.
- g. A proposed delivery timetable, including launch of a Congress website at least 12 months prior to the event, communications and promotional activities, and registration details.

#### **4. An explanation of proposed Islands Water Congress content, including:**

- a. A proposed overarching theme for the Islands Water Congress, with justification (to be agreed with IWRA if successful) and subthemes
- b. Indicative programme elements and their content, such as plenary sessions and high-level panels, keynote speakers, regular sessions including academic paper presentations, poster sessions, special sessions led by organisations, workshops, cultural programmes, and opening and closing ceremonies
- c. IWRA commits to developing content using its extensive network of experts



and to invite various high-level experts and personalities as speakers. Please provide a description of how the bidding organisation will also develop substantive content, and what further support is expected from IWRA.

- d. Details of proposed mechanisms for submitting, collecting, and reviewing abstracts for individual presentations and/or proposals for special sessions by organisations, as well as for selecting presenters at the Islands Water Congress.

## 5. Suggested social programmes, technical visits, and other activities

- a. Brief outline on the proposed social programme, including an invite-only VIP welcome reception prior to the Opening Ceremony and social activities open to all participants, such as Gala Dinner, on-site lunches, and cultural activities. Please specify how the costs for these activities will be covered (e.g. included in registration fees or ticketed separately).
- b. Basic details on accompanying guest activities.
- c. Basic details on proposed technical visits.

## 6. Financial considerations

- a. Applicants must demonstrate financial stability and capacity to cover the Congress. A detailed budget must include:
  - Payment of the Islands Water Congress hosting fee of €100.000 (Euros) to IWRA, payable in agreed instalments in advance
  - Coverage of all costs related to a site visit of the proposed venue by two (2) IWRA representatives, including travel, accommodation and incidental expenses,



1st Islands Water Congress: Plenary Session

at least 10 months prior to the Islands Water Congress

- Coverage of travel, accommodation, and full Congress accommodation costs for a minimum of eight (8) IWRA-nominated participants
- b. To note: registration fees for all IWRA staff and Board members will be waived by the organisers; all revenues generated by the Congress, including registration fees, sponsorship, and exhibition income, will be retained by the host organisation; the bidding organisation accepts full financial responsibility for the organisation and delivery of the Islands Water Congress; IWRA shall not be exposed to, or liable for, any financial losses incurred through the organisation or hosting of the Islands Water Congress.

- c. Confirmation that the bidding organisation agrees to hold monthly coordination calls with the IWRA Executive Office, beginning from the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement.

**7. Formal acceptance of the Terms of Reference of this document.**

**8. Contact details of the bidding organisation, including main contact person and core delivery team of the Islands Water Congress.**

**STEP 3: DECISION BY THE IWRA EXECUTIVE BOARD  
SEPTEMBER 2026**

Following a review of all full applications by the IWRA Congress and Events Committee, a recommendation report will be submitted to the IWRA Executive Board for final decision.

**STEP 4: SIGNING THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

**OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2026**

Once a bid is accepted by the IWRA Board, a Memorandum of Agreement will be negotiated and signed between IWRA and the selected host. The Memorandum of Agreement must be signed in advance of any public announcement of the Islands Water Congress.

**STEP 5: ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WINNER**

**DECEMBER 2026**

If possible, representatives from the host will attend an upcoming IWRA World Water Congress or Islands Water Congress to formally announce their successful candidature and start promotion of their Islands Water Congress.



2nd Islands Water Congress announcement during the XIX World Water Congress, December 2025, Marrakech, Morocco

# DETAILED TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Applicants bidding to host an IWRA Islands Water Congress must demonstrate their capacity to deliver the following requirements as part of their full application:**

## MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

The host organisation will establish a National Organising Committee (NOC) with full responsibility of budget management, as well as a local supporting Congress Secretariat.

Together, they will be responsible for:

- » Overall logistics, management, and coordination of the Islands Water Congress, including:
  - contracting a venue of an appropriate size and standard
  - negotiating hotel and/or other suitable accommodation rates for attendees
  - organising all catering included with registration
  - arranging transportation and logistics for technical visits, field trips, and social events (e.g., Gala Dinner, Awards Ceremonies, VIP Events, etc.)
- » Frequent liaison with IWRA Executive Office:
  - Regular process updates and procedural checks
  - Monthly coordination calls
  - Advance review and approval of key promotional items
  - Ad-hoc communication as required
- » Financial management, budgeting and keeping of accounts, including:
  - Budget planning and expenditure monitoring

- Opening and managing bank accounts
- Compliance with any local tax or regulatory requirements
- Keeping books of accounts
- Cash-flow management, invoicing, and payment of accounts
- Checking bank statements and monitoring non-payments
- Control of financial contributions fund and sponsorship funds
- Receiving registration fees and other income
- Advice on insurance needs (Public Liability and Abandonment) and on transfer of funds (country to country);
- Management of surplus funds
- Production of final accounts

## WEBSITES

- » The host organisation is responsible for creating and maintaining a dedicated IWRA Islands Water Congress website ([www.islandswatercongress.org](http://www.islandswatercongress.org)), which will serve as the primary platform for Congress communication and participant interaction. At a minimum, the website must include:
  - Promotional information about the Islands Water Congress
  - Registration information and access to the registration system
- » IWRA Islands Water Congress website must also link to a collaborative online platform developed or chosen by the host for the submission, management, and review of abstracts and special session proposals. This platform must be integrated with the registration system to support the Congress' preparatory processes. All materials

submitted through the platform must be shared with the IWRA in an organised format.

- » All material received is to be copied to IWRA following the Congress in an organised format.
- » Both the website and collaborative online platform must be operational at least 12 months prior to the Congress.

## PRESS

- » The host organisation is responsible all media-related activities, including:
  - Press accreditation and on-site arrangements during the Islands Water Congress
  - Press releases and briefings before, during, and after the Congress
  - Coordination of press coverage throughout the event

## PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATIONS

All promotional and communication must be proposed by the host organisation and approved by the IWRA. These may include:

- » Save-the-Date announcements and Call for Papers
- » Pre-event newsletters
- » Sponsorship and exhibition materials
- » Posters and brochures
- » Congress Programme
- » Participant lists

The related tasks include (but are not limited to):

- » Creation of a logo and visual identity (including colour scheme and layout)
- » Design, production, and quality control of all



print and digital materials

- » Proofreading and translating of content into all official Congress languages
- » Establishment and management of production timelines and print deadlines
- » Coordination with printers and material suppliers before, during and after the Congress
- » Development of a Congress mobile application
- » Video recordings of key events during the Congress :
  - The Islands Water Congress Programme
  - Practical information on accommodation, transport, access, etc.
  - Clear identification of the event as an IWRA Congress

## THEMES

- » The host will establish, in collaboration with IWRA, an International Scientific Committee (ISC) composed of local and international experts.
- » The ISC will be responsible for the technical content of the Congress, including for proposing the final overarching theme and sub-themes for the IWRA Islands Water Congress and for managing the call for, review and selection of all abstracts and session proposals.
- » The theme proposed in the bid may be refined following the host selection, in consultation with the host, IWRA, and ISC.
- » Final approval of the overarching theme and sub-themes rests with IWRA.

## TECHNICAL EXPOSITIONS AND SPONSORSHIP

Conditions for any technical exhibitions and sponsorship packages are proposed by the bidding organisation with final approval by IWRA. The proposal must include a fully equipped stand for IWRA at no cost.

## TECHNICAL VISITS/FIELD TRIPS

The host organisation is responsible for the planning and delivery of technical visits and fields trips, including:

- » Selecting sites
- » Invitations and ticketing
- » Liaison with organisers
- » Transport, guides, meals, and on-site logistics
- » Communications of site details to registered participants

## FACILITIES

Depending on the final programme, indicative space requirements typically include:

- » A plenary room that can accommodate all attendees
- » 3-5 rooms for parallel sessions with a capacity of 50-100 people in each
- » Rooms for special sessions and side events
- » Dedicated coordination rooms for the host organisation, IWRA staff, and other groups with management or organisational responsibilities
- » A VIP reception room
- » Breakout spaces for meetings and exchanges
- » Press facilities

- » Space for technical exhibitions
- » Space for poster presentations
- » High speed Wi-Fi Internet access throughout the entire venue
- » A suitable venue for the Gala Dinner for invited and/or paying guests on one evening of the Congress.

## LANGUAGE/TRANSLATION

English is the official language of the Islands Water Congress and all related materials. Additional official languages may be included, so long as adequate translation is provided for English language speakers. Additional languages may also be used depending on Congress location, participants involved, and translation services available.

## ACCOMMODATION

The host organisation is responsible for:

- » Negotiating favourable accommodation rates across a range of price categories
- » Finalising agreements and/or contracts with hotels and other accommodation providers, such as colleges, etc.
- » Coordinating room allocations, deposits, cancellations, and liaison with accommodation providers

## REGISTRATION MANAGEMENT

- » The host is responsible for establishing and managing the registration process in consultation with IWRA.
- » Registration fees and categories:
  - Registration fees shall be set in agreement with IWRA.
  - The Congress is open to anyone wishing to attend.

- Discounts on registration must be offered to IWRA Gold Members.
- Discounts are usually offered for “early bird” registrations, students, and participants from developing countries.
- Registration must include on-site lunches.
- » Registration systems and operations:
  - Set-up and management of registration systems (digital or manual)
  - Organisation and supervision of badge production, Congress kits, and pre-ordered tickets
- » Advance registration:
  - Receipt and monitoring of registration payments
  - Management of registration fee bank account
  - Issuing of confirmations and receipts
  - Handling cancellations, refunds, unpaid fees, and overpayments
- » On-site registrations:
  - Set-up and operation of on-site registration desks
  - Cashier and ticketing arrangements
  - Distribution of badges, materials, and Congress kits
  - Maintenance and updating of participant lists









### Contact

IWRA Executive Office  
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75008 Paris  
France

**Tel:** +33 6 44 20 57 53

**Email:** [islands.congress@iwra.org](mailto:islands.congress@iwra.org)

[www.iwra.org](http://www.iwra.org)

[www.islandswatercongress.org](http://www.islandswatercongress.org)



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